

## Application Instructions for the Department of Political Science PhD Program

- \*\*\* We do not admit applicants who are interested only in earning an M.A. degree in Political Science at Michigan State University. We only consider applicants who are interested in earning a Ph.D. degree in Political Science.
- \*\*\* We admit students to the Ph.D. program for the Fall Semester only. We do not admit students who want to start in the Spring Semester.
- \*\*\* Make sure that your academic transcripts are sent only to the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University; see the instructions in item #8 below.

### Application Instructions:

1. You must fill out an on-line application form. This form is available at:  
  
<https://grad.msu.edu/apply/>  
  
The form will ask you for the department's doctoral-program code. This code is: 4387.
2. Pay the nonrefundable application fee (drawn on U.S. funds) using Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, or an electronic check.
3. You must submit a **Personal Statement** to the on-line application form.  
In this Personal Statement you should discuss how your background and life experiences, including social, economic, cultural, familial, educational, or other opportunities or challenges motivated your decision to pursue a Ph.D. degree in political science.
4. You must submit an **Academic Statement** to the on-line application form.  
In this Academic Statement you should describe your plans for graduate study. In particular, you should:
  - Describe and discuss your career goal or goals. For example, are you primarily interested in becoming a faculty member in a college or university? Or are you primarily interested in using the research skills obtained in graduate school to become a policymaker or practitioner? Why do you have your particular career goal or goals?

- Indicate the subfield of political science at Michigan State (MSU) which is your primary interest. These subfields are: American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Political Philosophy, and Public Policy. Please discuss why you are interested in having an academic major in this subfield of our doctoral program.
- Describe the subfield of political science at MSU in which you would be interested in having an academic minor. These subfields are: American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Political Philosophy, Public Policy, and Quantitative Research Methods. Please discuss why you are interested in having an academic minor in this subfield of our doctoral program.
- Describe and discuss any research skills that you already have that might be useful in your graduate career. These skills might include fluency in a foreign language, training in mathematics or statistics, or competence in computer programming.
- Describe any substantial research projects in which you have been involved, and discuss what you learned from these projects, both about the substance and results of your research as well as what you learned about yourself in your experiences as a researcher.
- Please discuss what you see as the special strengths and capabilities that you would bring as a student to a doctoral program in political science.
- Please discuss any weaknesses or other concerns you might have about yourself as a student in a doctoral program in political science.
- Discuss the ways in which your career goals and research interests fit the strengths and capabilities of MSU's Department of Political Science. In other words, why are you applying to the MSU Department? As part of this discussion, you should mention the specific faculty members with whom you might wish to study. Short biographies of the MSU faculty members in Political Science are available here:

<https://polisci.msu.edu/people/faculty.html>

Please list the other graduate programs in political science to which you are applying.

5. Once you have completed your application form, click on "Submit". You will be sent via email an "Applicant ID" that you will be able to use to log into the graduate application portal.
6. You will need to request that three letters of recommendation be submitted as part of your application file. These letters of recommendation for you should be written by people who know you personally and who are also very familiar with your academic work and your academic capabilities. You should personally contact these individuals and provide them with the following list of items that should be covered in each letter:
  - The recommender should discuss his or her relationship to you. Normally the recommender is (or was) an instructor for an academic class that you are currently taking (or that you took previously). In general, letters of recommendation from academic instructors or research advisors are much more useful in the admissions process than are letters from non-academic employers.

- The recommender should discuss what he or she sees as the special strengths that you would have as a student in a doctoral program in political science.
- The recommender should discuss what he or she sees as any weaknesses that you might have as a student in a doctoral program in political science.
- The recommender should compare you to other students he or she has previously taught. Especially useful would be how the recommender would compare you to other students he or she has taught who have attended graduate school.
- The recommender should provide an assessment of your prospects for completion of a doctoral degree in political science and for achieving success in your chosen subfield of political science.
- Finally, the recommender should feel free to provide any other observations that would enable the reader of the letter to gain a deeper understanding of you and your capabilities for graduate study in political science.

For instructions on how your recommender should submit the letter of recommendation to MSU, see step #7 below.

7. These three letters of recommendation must be submitted by the recommenders themselves to the on-line **Grad Portal**.

To arrange for your recommenders to submit their letters of recommendation to the **Grad Portal** you (the applicant) must do the following:

- To log into the **Grad Portal** click on the following link:  
  
<https://admissions.msu.edu/gradportal/>
- Sign in (using the box in upper right hand corner of the screen):
  - Enter your Applicant ID, which is the 6-digit number sent to your email address when you submitted your on-line application form.
  - Enter your password. Your password is the one you entered when creating your on-line application form.
- In the **Grad Portal**, click on “Letters of Recommendation”.
- Click on “Register Recommender”.
- Type in your letter writer’s first name, last name, and email address.
- Check whether or not you waive your rights of access to the recommender’s letter. Recommenders will sometimes not agree to submit a letter of recommendation if you have not indicated that you waive your rights of access to the letter.

- Click “Add Recommender”.

This process will automatically generate an email that will be sent to your recommender. This email lets the recommender know that you are requesting a letter from them. The recommenders will then be given a link to the **Grad Portal**, where they will first fill out information about themselves and their relationship to you. Your recommender will then be prompted to upload their letter of recommendation. Valid file types include .pdf, .jpg/jpeg, .tif/tiff, .bmp, .gif, .png.

To see if your recommender has actually uploaded his or her letter, you can check the “File Uploads” portion of the **Grad Portal**.

8. You should ask the Registrar of each college or university you have attended to send one official copy of your transcript only to the following address:

Ms. Sarah Krause  
Graduate Programs Assistant  
Department of Political Science  
Michigan State University  
368 Farm Lane, 303 South Kedzie Hall  
East Lansing, MI 48824

Transcripts for coursework completed at Michigan State University do not need to be requested.

\*\*\* **DO NOT HAVE YOUR TRANSCRIPT OR TRANSCRIPTS SENT TO THE “OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS” AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY.**

\*\*\* Transcripts uploaded to the **Grad Portal** by the applicant **ARE NOT OFFICIAL**. Transcripts that are uploaded to the **Grad Portal** will be deleted and your application will not be reviewed until the official transcripts are received at the address listed above.

\*\*\* **International Applicants:** International applicants must have a transcript and a copy of their diploma, in both their native language and in English, sent by the institutions they attended to the departmental address listed above.

9. An international applicant must submit his or her score on a test of English language competency. A score must be submitted from one of two different tests.

The most common test is the TOEFL (“Test of English as a Foreign Language”). You must request that your score be sent to MSU by the ETS organization, which manages the test. To do this on the test you will have to list the Michigan State University code, which is 1465. Information about the TOEFL test is available at: <http://www.toefl.org>.

The other test is the IELTS (“International English Language Testing System”). Your score will be sent to MSU by the IELTS organization, which manages the test. On the test you will have to list the Michigan State University code, which is 1465.

Information about the IELTS test is available at: <https://www.ielts.org/>.

For more information for international applicants, see the Graduate School's web pages for International Students: <https://grad.msu.edu/internationalstudents>.

Please carefully follow the other requirements on the Graduate School's page for international students.

**Waivers of the TOEFL/IELTS Requirement:**

- You will receive an automatic waiver of the TOEFL/IELTS requirement if you earned a Bachelor's degree in the U.S. The BA or BS program should be a regular 4-year degree program with the majority of credits earned in the U.S.
- If you received a Master's degree from one of the universities in the link below, you will receive an automatic TOEFL/IELTS score waiver:

<http://www.aau.edu/about/default.aspx?id=16710>

Note: Any international student who qualifies for a waiver and who will be a teaching assistant MSU must still pass the SPEAK test when the student arrives at MSU. The SPEAK test is a test of the student's ability to speak conversational English.

10. All materials should be received by the deadline for consideration for admission for the following fall semester. The Graduate Admissions Committee will begin reviewing application materials soon after.

If you have questions about application procedures, please email the Graduate Program Assistant, Sarah Krause, at [skrause@msu.edu](mailto:skrause@msu.edu), or call her at (517) 355-2167. For questions about the academic content of the doctoral program or related matters, please email the Ph.D. Admissions Director, Professor Sarah Reckhow, at [reckhow@msu.edu](mailto:reckhow@msu.edu).